

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

SALVADOR SEGOVIA, JR.,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	CIVIL ACTION
vs.)	
)	Case No. 4:24-CV-00244
FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

COMPLAINT

COMES NOW, SALVADOR SEGOVIA, JR., by and through the undersigned counsel, and files this, his Complaint against Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.* (“ADA”) and the ADA’s Accessibility Guidelines, 28 C.F.R. Part 36 (“ADAAG”). In support thereof, Plaintiff respectfully shows this Court as follows:

JURISDICTION

1. This Court has original jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for Plaintiff’s claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*, based upon Defendant’s failure to remove physical barriers to access and violations of Title III of the ADA.

PARTIES

2. Plaintiff, SALVADOR SEGOVIA, JR. (hereinafter “Plaintiff”) is, and has been at all times relevant to the instant matter, a natural person residing in Houston, Texas (Harris County).

3. Plaintiff is disabled as defined by the ADA.

4. Plaintiff is required to traverse in a wheelchair and is substantially limited in

performing one or more major life activities, including but not limited to: walking and standing.

5. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility purposes.

6. In addition to being a customer of the public accommodation on the Property, Plaintiff is also an independent advocate for the rights of similarly situated disabled persons and is a “tester” for the purpose of enforcing Plaintiff’s civil rights, monitoring, determining and ensuring whether places of public accommodation are in compliance with the ADA. Her motivation to return to a location, in part, stems from a desire to utilize ADA litigation to make Plaintiff’s community more accessible for Plaintiff and others; and pledges to do whatever is necessary to demonstrate the plausibility of Plaintiff returning to the Property once the barriers to access identified in this Complaint are removed in order to strengthen the already existing standing to confer jurisdiction upon this Court so an injunction can be issued correcting the numerous ADA violations on this property. (“Advocacy Purposes”).

7. Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP (hereinafter “FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP”), is a Texas limited partnership that transacts business in the State of Texas and within this judicial district.

8. Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, may be properly served with process for service via its Registered Agent, to wit: c/o Alevergreen International Corporation, Registered Agent, 6102 Briar Terrace Drive, Houston, TX 77072.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

9. On or about December 11, 2023, Plaintiff was a customer at “Snowflake Donuts,” a business located at 1215 Aldine Bender Road Street, Houston, TX 77032, referenced herein as “Snowflake Donuts”. Attached is a receipt documenting Plaintiff’s purchase. *See* Exhibit 1. Also attached is a photograph documenting Plaintiff’s visit to the Property. *See* Exhibit 2.

10. The December 11, 2023, visit by Plaintiff to Snowflake Donuts is his second visit to the Property.

11. Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, is the owner or co-owner of the real property and improvements that Snowflake Donuts is situated upon and that is the subject of this action, referenced herein as the “Property.”

12. Plaintiff lives only 4 miles from the Property.

13. Given the close vicinity of the Property to Plaintiff’s residence, Plaintiff is routinely travelling by the Property on at least a monthly basis.

14. Plaintiff’s access to the business(es) located 1215 Aldine Bender Road Street, Houston, TX 77032, Harris County Property Appraiser’s property identification number 0131610000050 (“the Property”), and/or full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, foods, drinks, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein were denied and/or limited because of his disabilities, and he will be denied and/or limited in the future unless and until Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, is compelled to remove the physical barriers to access and correct the ADA violations that exist at the Property, including those set forth in this Complaint.

15. Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, as property owner, is responsible for complying with the ADA for both the exterior portions and interior portions of the Property. Even if there is a lease between Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, and the tenant allocating responsibilities for ADA compliance within the unit the tenant operates, that lease is only between the property owner and the tenant and does not abrogate the Defendant’s independent requirement to comply with the ADA for the entire Property it owns, including the interior portions of the Property which are public

accommodations. *See* 28 CFR § 36.201(b).

16. Plaintiff has visited the Property at least once before as a customer and advocate for the disabled. Plaintiff intends to revisit the Property within six months after the barriers to access detailed in this Complaint are removed and the Property is accessible again. The purpose of the revisit is to be a return customer, to determine if and when the Property is made accessible and to maintain the already existing standing for this lawsuit for Advocacy Purposes.

17. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property to purchase goods and/or services as a return customer living in the near vicinity as well as for Advocacy Purposes but does not intend to re-expose himself to the ongoing barriers to access and engage in a futile gesture of visiting the public accommodation known to Plaintiff to have numerous and continuing barriers to access.

18. Plaintiff travelled to the Property as a customer and as an independent advocate for the disabled, encountered the barriers to access the Property that are detailed in this Complaint, engaged those barriers, suffered legal harm and legal injury, and will continue to suffer such harm and injury as a result of the illegal barriers to access present at the Property.

19. Although Plaintiff did not personally encounter each and every barrier to access identified in Plaintiff's Complaint, Plaintiff became aware of all identified barriers prior to filing the Complaint and because Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Property as a customer and advocate for the disabled within six months or sooner after the barriers to access are removed, it is likely that despite not actually encountering a particular barrier to access on one visit, Plaintiff may encounter a different barrier to access identified in the complaint in a subsequent visit as, for example, one accessible parking space may not be available and he would need to use an alternative accessible parking space in the future on his subsequent visit. As such, all barriers to

access identified in the Complaint must be removed in order to ensure Plaintiff will not be exposed to barriers to access and legally protected injury.

20. Plaintiff's inability to fully access the Property and the stores within in a safe manner and in a manner which inhibits the free and equal enjoyment of the goods and services offered at the Property, both now and into the foreseeable future, constitutes an injury in fact as recognized by Congress and is historically viewed by Federal Courts as an injury in fact.

COUNT I
VIOLATIONS OF THE ADA AND ADAAG

21. On July 26, 1990, Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*

22. Congress found, among other things, that:

- (i) some 43,000,000 Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities, and this number is increasing as the population as a whole is growing older;
- (ii) historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities, and, despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem;
- (iii) discrimination against individuals with disabilities persists in such critical areas as employment, housing public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services;
- (iv) individuals with disabilities continually encounter various forms of discrimination, including outright intentional exclusion, the discriminatory effects of architectural, transportation, and communication barriers, overprotective rules and policies, failure to make modifications to existing facilities and practices, exclusionary qualification standards and criteria, segregation, and relegation to lesser service, programs, activities, benefits, jobs, or other opportunities; and
- (v) the continuing existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination and prejudice denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is

justifiably famous, and costs the United States billions of dollars in unnecessary expenses resulting from dependency and non-productivity.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(a)(1) - (3), (5) and (9).

23. Congress explicitly stated that the purpose of the ADA was to:
- (i) provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities;
 - (ii) provide a clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities; and

* * * * *

- (iv) invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities.

42 U.S.C. § 12101(b)(1)(2) and (4).

24. The congressional legislation provided places of public accommodation one and a half years from the enactment of the ADA to implement its requirements.

25. The effective date of Title III of the ADA was January 26, 1992 (or January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

26. The Property is a public accommodation and service establishment.

27. Pursuant to the mandates of 42 U.S.C. § 12134(a), on July 26, 1991, the Department of Justice and Office of Attorney General promulgated federal regulations to implement the requirements of the ADA. 28 C.F.R. Part 36.

28. Public accommodations were required to conform to these regulations by January 26, 1992 (or by January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

29. The Property must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and ADAAG.

30. Plaintiff has attempted to, and has to the extent possible, accessed the Property in his capacity as a customer at the Property as well as an independent advocate for the disabled, but could not fully do so because of his disabilities resulting from the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

31. Plaintiff intends to visit the Property again in the very near future as a customer and as an independent advocate for the disabled, in order to utilize all of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations commonly offered at the Property, but will be unable to fully do so because of his disability and the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

32. Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, has discriminated against Plaintiff (and others with disabilities) by denying his access to, and full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations of the Property, as prohibited by, and by failing to remove architectural barriers as required by, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

33. Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, will continue to discriminate against Plaintiff and others with disabilities unless and until Defendant,

FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, is compelled to remove all physical barriers that exist at the Property, including those specifically set forth herein, and make the Property accessible to and usable by Plaintiff and other persons with disabilities.

34. A specific list of unlawful physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations which Plaintiff experienced and/or observed, or was made aware of prior to the filing of this Complaint, that precluded and/or limited Plaintiff's access to the Property and the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Property include, but are not limited to:

ACCESSIBLE ELEMENTS:

- i. Despite having a parking lot that is open to the public with more than four spaces, the Property has no accessible parking spaces complying with Section 502.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards in violation of Section 208.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to locate an accessible parking space and limited the travel options to visit the Property.
- ii. In front of Snowflake Donuts, the Property has an accessible ramp leading from the parking spaces to the accessible entrance with a slope exceeding 1:10 in some areas of the ramp, in violation of Section 405.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property because when ramps are too steep (more than 1:12) it requires too much physical arm strain to wheel up the ramp and increases the likelihood of the wheelchair falling backwards and Plaintiff being injured.

- iii. In front of Snowflake Donuts, due to a failure to enact a policy of proper grounds and foliage maintenance, there is grass growing at the base of the accessible ramp. As a result, the ground surfaces at the base of the accessible ramp have vertical rises in excess of $\frac{1}{4}$ (one quarter) inch in height, are not stable or slip resistant, have broken or unstable surfaces or otherwise fail to comply with Sections 302, 303 and 405.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the units of the Property as Plaintiff's wheel could get snagged on the vertical rise and cause the wheelchair to tip.
- iv. Due to the barriers to access identified in (ii and iii), the Property lacks an accessible route from the sidewalk and parking lot to the accessible entrance in violation of Section 206.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to utilize public transportation to access the public accommodations located on the Property.
- v. For the accessible entrances for all of the units of the Property, there is a doorway threshold with a vertical rise of at least an inch and does not contain a bevel with a maximum slope of 1:2 in violation of Section 404.2.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff to access the interior of the Property at this location as the vertical rise at the door threshold could potentially cause Plaintiff to tip over when attempting to enter. Moreover, this barrier to access is made more difficult by the fact that it is in the doorway and Plaintiff would be required to

hold the door open with one hand while attempt to the “push” the wheel of the wheelchair over the vertical rise.

- vi. The maneuvering clearance of these accessible entrances is not level (surface slope in excess of 1:48) in violation of Section 404.2.4.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access these units of the Property since it is often necessary for individuals in wheelchairs to need to use their hands to both wheel through the doorway and keep the door open with another hand. When the maneuvering clearance is not level, this ordinarily difficult process is made even more difficult by the inappropriately higher slope.
- vii. Defendant fails to adhere to a policy, practice and procedure to ensure that all facilities are readily accessible to and usable by disabled individuals.

SNOWFLAKE DONUTS RESTROOMS

- viii. The restroom lacks signage in compliance with Sections 216.8 and 703 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to locate accessible restroom facilities.
- ix. The door to the restrooms has a maximum clear width below 32 (thirty-two) inches in violation of Section 404.2.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities as wheelchair typically has a clear width of between 30 and 32 inches and the wheelchair will not be able to fit through the doorway to access the restroom. In the case that the wheelchair may barely fit through, the tight doorway would likely injure Plaintiff's hands

as they could get caught between the wheel and the doorway.

- x. The door hardware providing access to the restrooms requires tight grasping and twisting of the wrist in violation of Section 404.2.7 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- xi. Restrooms have a sink with inadequate knee and toe clearance in violation of Section 306 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom sink as Plaintiff is seated in a wheelchair and, when seated, Plaintiff's feet and legs protrude out in front. In order to properly utilize a sink, Plaintiff's legs must be able to be underneath the surface of the sink, but due to the improper configuration of the sink, there is no room underneath for Plaintiff's legs and feet.
- xii. The controls on the faucets require pinching and turning of the wrists in violation of Section 309.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to utilize the restroom facilities.
- xiii. The height of the bottom edge of the reflective surface of the mirror in the bathroom is above the 40 inch maximum height permitted by Section 603.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for the Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to properly utilize the mirror in the restroom since Plaintiff is sitting in a wheelchair and is lower than a person standing up.

- xiv. Inside the restroom, there is an approximate 10-inch step up to access the toilet. As a result, the floor of the restroom has excessive vertical rise and is in violation of Section 303.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it dangerous and difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely utilize the restroom facilities.
- xv. As a result of the barrier to access referenced in (ix and xiv), the Property lacks an accessible route connecting the exterior of the Property to all accessible elements and features inside the Property in violation of Section 206.2.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to access public features of the Property due to the lack of a safe accessible route leading from the exterior to interior spaces inside the Property.
- xvi. The grab bars/handrails adjacent to the commode are missing and violate Section 604.5 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to safely transfer from the wheelchair to the toilet and back to the wheelchair.
- xvii. The hand operated flush control is not located on the open side of the accessible toilet in violation of Section 604.6 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff and/or any disabled individual to flush the toilet as the location of the flush control on the open side is significantly easier to reach than when it is positioned on the closed side.

xviii. The toilet paper dispenser in the accessible toilet is not positioned seven to nine inches in front of the toilet and therefore is in violation of Section 604.7 of the 2010 ADAAG standards. This barrier to access would make it difficult for Plaintiff to utilize the toilet due to the fact the toilet paper dispenser is at an improper distance from the toilet, given Plaintiff's disability, Plaintiff would not be able to get up and reach the toilet paper.

35. The violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the Property.

36. Plaintiff requires an inspection of the Property in order to determine all of the discriminatory conditions present at the Property in violation of the ADA.

37. The removal of the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations alleged herein is readily achievable and can be accomplished and carried out without significant difficulty or expense. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv); 42 U.S.C. § 12181(9); 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

38. All of the violations alleged herein are readily achievable to modify to the Property into compliance with the ADA.

39. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is readily achievable because the nature and cost of the modifications are relatively low.

40. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is readily achievable because Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, has the financial resources to make the necessary modifications. According to the Property Appraiser, the appraised value of the Property is \$806,449.00.

41. The removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Property is also readily achievable because Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, has available to it a \$5,000.00 tax credit and up to a \$15,000.00 tax deduction from the IRS for spending money on accessibility modifications.

42. Upon information and good faith belief, the Property has been altered since 2010.

43. In instances where the 2010 ADAAG standards do not apply, the 1991 ADAAG standards apply, and all of the alleged violations set forth herein can be modified to comply with the 1991 ADAAG standards.

44. Plaintiff is without adequate remedy at law, is suffering irreparable harm, and reasonably anticipates that he will continue to suffer irreparable harm unless and until Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, is required to remove the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Property, including those alleged herein.

45. Plaintiff's requested relief serves the public interest.

46. The benefit to Plaintiff and the public of the relief outweighs any resulting detriment to Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP.

47. Plaintiff's counsel is entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees and costs of litigation from Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12188 and 12205.

48. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188(a), this Court is provided authority to grant injunctive relief to Plaintiff, including the issuance of an Order directing Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, to modify the Property to the extent required by the ADA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays as follows:

- (a) That the Court find Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, in violation of the ADA and ADAAG;
- (b) That the Court issue a permanent injunction enjoining Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, from continuing their discriminatory practices;
- (c) That the Court issue an Order requiring Defendant, FORESTFARMS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP to (i) remove the physical barriers to access and (ii) alter the Property to make it readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities to the extent required by the ADA;
- (d) That the Court award Plaintiff his reasonable attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs; and
- (e) That the Court grant such further relief as deemed just and equitable in light of the circumstances.

Dated: January 22, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Douglas S. Schapiro

Douglas S. Schapiro, Esq.

Southern District of Texas ID No. 3182479

The Schapiro Law Group, P.L

7301-A W. Palmetto Park Rd., #100A

Boca Raton, FL 33433

Tel: (561) 807-7388

Email: schapiro@schapirolawgroup.com